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Good Girls and the Great War: Dos Passos's Representations of American Women at War in the U.S.A. Trilogy

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by

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ABSTRACT

Eighteen years after the signing of the peace at Versailles, Dos Passos furthered his sustained protest of U.S. entry into the First World War by publishing *U.S.A.* as a trilogy in 1936. *U.S.A.,* when read as a powerful and unequivocally antiwar work of literature, reveals Dos Passos's deep dissatisfaction with modern American women through representations that provocatively suggest that they overwhelmingly supported the war without question or cognizance, and that they believed themselves to be making desirable progress as a result. Not only is *U.S.A.* a protest against U.S. entry into the First World War, it is also a protest against the militarization of the American woman.

Dos Passos seizes upon what he perceived to be an aggravated dissonance between American men and women. He depicts a hostile, domestic scene and sympathetically reveals many of the abuses that modern American women were suffering. Public relations magnate and war profiteer, J.W. Moorehouse, exudes an illusory warmth and possesses Svengali powers of persuasion over women. The man who leads Janey Williams, Eleanor Stoddard and Eveline Hutchins to work at a Red Cross office in Paris during the war speaks directly to their vulnerabilities, and his ostensible warmth, kindness and gentlemanly manners starkly contrast the harsh worlds the three women were navigating prior to his arrival. They are given a sense that they are at home with him, and they enjoy his partnership. Like the war, his warmth is an illusion and his inclusive gestures are ultimately false. The women whose lives he touches are ultimately left out in the cold.

Dos Passos recognized that women were suffering; however, *U.S.A.* also delivers a penetrating critique of American women and their perpetuation of a class system that

brutally subjugated working-class men. Dos Passos was not a misogynist – he was not a feminist either. Dos Passos believed that working-class men deserved a break, and that women who supported the war made it abundantly clear that they, along with the capitalist bosses, were not going to provide them with one. Dos Passos's political views are the subject of much debate and it is my contention that Dos Passos was always a conservative thinker, even as he was believed to be a fellow traveler of the Left. Dos Passos was deeply troubled by the progressive-era changes he was witnessing, the breakdown of the American family, and an increasingly-violent society that tended to repudiate the importance of motherhood and the idea that nurturing and educated women, through their roles as mothers, were essential for the creation of a more peaceful American society. Dos Passos's conservatism comes from a place of love, and he begs American women to ask where it is that they are being led.

INTRODUCTION

Eighteen years after the signing of the peace at Versailles, Dos Passos furthered his sustained protest of U.S. entry into the First World War by publishing *U.S.A* as a trilogy in 1936. All of the radical outrage and pained exasperation he experienced and recorded during the war years did not subside over time or else morph into a grim form of acceptance. His war protest, more than ten years later, does not betray his youthful, rebellious proclamations and earlier cries for revolt. He still believed, as he did in 1917: "The war is utter damn nonsense – a vast cancer fed by lies and self seeking malignity on the part of those who don't do the fighting" (*The Fourteenth Chronicle*[1], 92).

U.S.A., a mature and sophisticated account of the war years, places considerable emphasis upon women's participation in the war. Women were not involved in the creation of corporate and governmental policy—they still had not yet been granted economic autonomy and nationwide suffrage rights—yet, Dos Passos implicates them in their wartime role throughout the fictional narratives. His ambivalence regarding modern American women and their plight is apparent, most noticeably in how he relates them to the war. Accusations of "self seeking malignity" on their behalf are routinely raised and, at the same time, Dos Passos offers his own judicious contemplation of their struggles, and it is entirely plausible to suggest that he viewed them, in addition, as being woefully misaligned—and not without a fair amount of justification. Dos Passos nonetheless delivers cold fates unto women who embraced war as a surrogate to attend to their own immediate needs and miscarried wants.

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[1] Subsequent references to *The Fourteenth Chronicle* will be cited parenthetically in the text as *14th*.

One Man's Initiation (1917) and *Three Soldiers* (1921), Dos Passos's earlier war novels, sought to dispel the myths that nurtured ignorant, romantic notions of modern warfare and the idea that all American soldiers, many of whom were conscripted, resembled propaganda poster images of the Anglo-Saxon, All-American hero. Dos Passos does not focus on soldiers in *U.S.A.,* and other than a brief scene in Richard Savage's narrative, he doesn't take his readers to a battlefield. Yet, the presence of the war throughout the latter-half of *The 42nd Parallel* and *1919* is always apparent. The war pervades every aspect of his characters' lives, the overwhelming majority of whom are safely-distanced from the carnage he witnessed in France and Italy as an ambulance driver with the Norton-Harjes volunteer ambulance unit. An August 24, 1917 diary entry reveals what the sheltered Americans back home receiving second-hand accounts of the war did not experience –"The grey crooked fingers of the dead, the dark look of dirty mangled bodies, their groans and joltings in the ambulance, the vast tomtom of the guns" (*14th,* 95).

Dos Passos's U.S.A. is sick. He takes a holistic approach in his attempt to diagnose the American condition by equally representing women in his fictional narratives. Dos Passos paid attention to women and his narratives at times reveal a certain fascination. Eleanor and Eveline decide that "nothing could ever break up their beautiful friendship and they'd always tell each other everything" (*The 42nd Parallel*[2], 195). Janey "discovered that just a little peroxide in the water when she washed her hair made it blonder and took away that mousey look…she'd put a speck of rouge on her little finger and rub it very carefully on her lips" (*42nd,* 148). Dos Passos abhorred violence

[2] Subsequent references to *The 42nd Parallel* will be cited parenthetically as *42nd*.

against women and was critical of men who reduced them to mere sex objects. He concerned himself with women's issues and considered their influence despite their lack of political and economic power. He uses repetition throughout the fictional narratives to place emphasis upon the more menacing qualities of American society, and if *U.S.A.* serves as an honest testament to American women and their attitudes toward the war, an overwhelming majority of American women supported the war without question or cognizance. Not only is *U.S.A.* a protest against American entry into the First World War, it is also a protest against the militarization of American women. For Dos Passos, there was something entirely sinister about the idea of American women ignorantly and at times jubilantly urging young, male conscripts to the battlefield. Dos Passos's militarized women do not envision the battlefield to be a site of wholesale human slaughter.

Public relations guru J.W. Moorehouse spins the war and sells it to the American public. Dos Passos's chief war propagandist and cutthroat capitalist appears to have convinced even himself that U.S. entry into the war would serve to save civilization. While Moorehouse convinces the public that the U.S. is saving civilization through its war effort, his own finances have been saved upon declaration of war and he triumphantly says after President Wilson's declaration, "Well, it's come at last. I just wired Washington offering my services to the government. I'd like to see 'em try and pull a railroad strike now" (*42nd,* 308). Moorehouse's second wife Gertrude is one of the few women who expresses her cognizance of the realities of war—"the thought of all that misery and slaughter gave her horrible pains in the back of the head" (*42nd,* 310). She spends the war years in a sanitarium after she goes against her instinct to divorce

Moorehouse and withdraw her wealthy family's money from his account and bankrupt him. Moorehouse was born into the working class and it was Gertrude who lifted him out of it. J.W. Moorehouse, one of America's "sixty most important men," a man who did more than any one living man… to form the public mind in this country" (*The Big Money,* 1199, my ellipsis), leaves behind him a trail of women who become frozen in place after his truth becomes apparent. The man who leads Janey Williams, Eleanor Stoddard and Eveline Hutchins to volunteer at a Red Cross office in Paris during the war exudes an illusory warmth and possesses Svengali powers of persuasion over women. Moorehouse speaks directly to women's vulnerabilities and his messages are warmly received.

Moorehouse asks Eleanor if he "may have the honor of being [her] financial counselor" and she found his "slight southern accent and oldschool gentlemanly manners very attractive" (*42nd,* 246). Repulsed by coarseness, her kindly working-class father and most of the men of her generation, Eleanor is determined to live life on her own terms—a nearly impossible economic feat. Her interest in Moorehouse is certainly piqued when he proposes to handle her finances and provide her with a much needed economic boost, and his gentlemanly manners make it clear that sex will not be expected in exchange for his services. After Janey Williams sits down to transcribe a meeting with Moorehouse, he asks, "Hadn't you better take off your hat and coat, or you won't feel them when you go out." And she thought, "there was something homey in his voice, different when he talked to the men" (*42nd,* 253). Moorehouse's concern for Janey's warmth is the kindest most innocent gesture she receives from a man, other than her brother Joe. After Janey knees Jerry Burnham in the groin in the back seat of his car he shouts: "I suppose you

think you ought to hold out for the wedding bells…I can get what I want with any nigger prostitute down the street here" (*42nd,* 144, my ellipsis). The hominess Janey hears in Moorehouse's voice appeals to her longing for domestic security, and her budding patriotism is later rewarded when she explains to Moorehouse that she left her previous job because her boss was an agent of the German government. Moorehouse hires her on the spot, for life. Eveline Hutchins "thought at once there was something sincere and appealing about [Moorehouse] like about her father, that she liked" (*1919,* 547). Eveline hosts radicals while volunteering in France and these gatherings often resemble a circus scene. She caters to her radicals and patiently listens to their apocalyptic rants. Communist Don Stevens finally notices her laughing mid-speech, "ask[s] her why, she said she didn't know except that he was so funny" (*1919,* 471). In contrast, when Moorehouse completes a rousing speech to the Red Cross volunteers in Paris, Eveline "felt stirred despite herself" (*1919,* 545). Moorehouse's optimism is sincere. For Eveline, he provides a more cheerful and welcome perspective— and it doesn't hurt that he's playing on the winning side. With his engaging blue eyes—Dos Passos rarely passes on an opportunity to illustrate their sway—Moorehouse's placating messages and seemingly-innocuous demeanor starkly contrast the harsh worlds the three women were navigating prior to his arrival. The irresistibility of his appeal cannot be denied and he offers the promise of inclusion and the sense that they are at home with him.

Michael Denning argues in *The Cultural Front* that *U.S.A.* " is finally a lament for the destruction of domestic life, a bitter satire of the sacrifices made in the name of revolution, art, patriotism, or the big money" (Denning, 189). The breakdown of all forms of normative, loving human relations in *U.S.A.* is pronounced, and not only does

this breakdown atomize Dos Passos's fictional population and send them scurrying around the war in search of something – anything!—it also prohibits the formation of any loving and meaningful human relationships in the war's aftermath. However tainted their visions of romantic love may be, Janey, Eleanor and Eveline are eventually denied any and all forms of love.

On a January evening on her way to meet Moorehouse for the first time, young Janey who is underdressed for the cold weather "wishe[s] she was a wealthy woman living in Chevy Chase and waiting for her limousine to come by and take her home to her husband and children and a roaring open fire." She sadly realizes she has had no beaux over the last year and that "she was on the shelf" (*42nd,* 252). Moorehouse and his paramour Eleanor "often talked about how silly people were who said that a man and a woman couldn't have a platonic friendship" (*42nd,* 304). Their ostensibly platonic friendship eventually fizzles after years of Moorehouse's mercenary refusal to divorce his invalid wife. Eleanor expertly decorates the Moorehouse's domestic space and quickly decides to follow him to France after the declaration of war. Moorehouse questions her hasty decision and she replies, "No, I feel I must… I could be a very good nurse" (*42nd,* 308). When she was young she "hated smells and the sight of blood" (*42nd,* 184). Eveline champions "free love" after being spurned by her first love. She loses her virginity in a room above a garage to a married, anarchist painter. Throughout the winter in New Mexico they meet at a cabin they call "desert island" and she poses for him nude. When José O'Riely's wife and mother of an inordinate number of children finds the drawings he terminates the relationship. O'Riely "had to have a woman to work for him and cook; he couldn't live on romantic lifeclasses, he had to eat, and Lola was a good

woman but stupid and untidy and had made him promise not to see Eveline again" (*1919,* 467). Eveline is a serial adulterer and wants men she cannot have – her later pursuit of Moorehouse destroys her "beautiful friendship" with Eleanor, the ease with which Moorehouse disposes of Eveline after several outings is notable, and the only home she successfully wrecks is the one she accidentally conceives after the war.

Dos Passos seizes upon what he perceived to be an aggravated dissonance between American men and women. With all of his complexities, criticisms and contradictions, it cannot be said that Dos Passos was a misogynist. He was not a feminist either and contemporary critics are mistaken to suggest that he was one or the other or both at the same time. If anything, he was somewhat of a romantic conservative who was wary of the progressive-era changes he was witnessing—despite his fellow travels with the anti-capitalist Left. His conservatism was coming from a place of love—not hate. *U.S.A.* depicts a broken social scene and Dos Passos was wary of women's "independence" because the only alternative accommodations that were provided for them ultimately served to benefit a corrupted capitalist system and its Great War. Michael Denning notes the ambivalence with which Dos Passos regarded independent women and yes, he exhibits a pained ambivalence. He is too even-handed to simply condemn the young women for their individual choices and lay the onus of blame directly upon them.

U.S.A. exhibits Dos Passos's painful longing for harmonious heterosexual relations on the domestic front and nostalgia for an idyllic, traditional American family that never was. The home that never was, and the imagined American family that Dos Passos held up as an ideal, could have been the one that he never enjoyed. Dos Passos

was a love child in the truest sense of the term. Dos Passos's father, John Randolph Dos Passos, was a prominent corporate attorney and a deeply romantic man. Dos Passos's mother, Lucy Addison Sprigg Madison, gave birth to her son out of wedlock. Dos Passos senior was legally married to another woman and, despite the romantic love he and Lucy Madison shared, he refused to divorce his invalid wife and provide a stable, loving home for Lucy and their son. Dos Passos and his mother suffered together in the absence of a father and husband, and she provided for young Dos Passos an unconventional, European "hotel childhood." As an adult writing *U.S.A.,* Dos Passos portrays women's "independence" to be an adaptive strategy, and he became infuriated when women, in startling numbers, grew to support a meaningless cause for which sons, brothers, potential husbands and lovers were sent to die.

It is highly unusual for any man to broach the subject of a woman's menstruation without displaying a trace of unease or discomfort. Dos Passos's curious editorial inclusion of the excruciatingly painful onset of menstruation and the accompanying suicidal thoughts experienced by Janey, Eleanor and Eveline must certainly have been meant to convey a message, one that was perhaps critical of their weakness in the face of womanhood and the denial of their life-giving capabilities. Some might consider it presumptuous of him to delve into a sensitive matter that he obviously had not personally experienced. Was he denigrating the three women for their instinct to contemplate their own violent death over the prospect of life and cultural regeneration, in some way foreshadowing their later participation in the war? His fictional characters are not lovingly rendered, and they very often appear as wretched manifestations of his own general malcontent. Unless he was protesting the villainous actions of powerful public

figures, Dos Passos would not have had the heart to lampoon a non-fictional subject as he does his fictional characters throughout *U.S.A.* Janey, Eleanor and Eveline have their character flaws, though Dos Passos's authorial tone becomes acerbic only *after* they embrace the war. Until then, he is remarkably sympathetic to the challenges they face as independent women, whether they are independent by choice or not, and he does plot their lives in ways that make their later choices, however reprehensible, appear justifiable. Dos Passos's statement concerning their fear of the vulnerabilities that accompany womanhood was an indictment of the increasingly-violent American society that tended to harshly repudiate the beauty, love and life that a woman could deliver, a society that was moving too fast in some regards, and not quickly enough in others.

Each woman suppresses her suicidal impulse in a manner that subtly foretells her future social development. When Janey's "curse" arrived, "it scared her and took all the strength out of her, made her want to crawl away out of sight like an old sick mangy cat" (*42nd,* 129). As a young tomboy with a buoyant heart, Janey wants nothing more than to be included by the boys and she likes "when they talked just like she was a boy too" (*42nd,* 128). Her curse strikes during a beautiful outing with her crush Alec and her brother Joe. The three lie under a boat to duck a storm and Janey slips "her arm around Alec's neck and let her hand rest timidly on his bare shoulder. He didn't move" (*42nd,* 130). Janey later runs off with painful cramps and leaves them behind for the first time. Her fear of her own sexuality repels men thereafter and prevents her from becoming any man's lover—she regrets the "dissipated look" she observes in the eyes of both Jerry Burnham and G.H.Barrow. Janey mentions her brother Joe while she smoke cigarettes with Jerry Burnham in his car and Jerry responds, "Do you feel that way towards me?

Love's a swell thing; goddam it, don't you realize it's not the way you feel towards your brother?" (*42nd,* 144). As she later gushes to Joe about how "it was a shame the weather was so mean and that it must be terrible for the poor soldiers in the trenches (*42nd,* 297), she projects her sisterly love onto the soldiers without realizing that mean weather may not be the meanest element of their experience. She only loves men when they cannot touch her.

Eleanor calls off from work with painful cramps and reads *Romola* by George Eliot, a female author who wrote under a male pseudonym, presumably so she would be taken seriously. *Romola* takes place in Florence and Eleanor later falsifies her background when she meets Eveline in the art museum and explains that her father is a painter in Florence whom she hasn't seen in years. Their "beautiful friendship," partly built upon a lie, enables her to co-found an interior decorating service with $1000 from Eveline's middle-class parents. Living luxuriously and beyond her means, she anxiously anticipates stock profits. When war is later declared and she knows that her finances are secure, she fashionably feigns patriotism: "The orchestra played *The Star-Spangled Banner* again; Eleanor sang some of the chorus in a shrill little treble voice (*42nd*, 309). Based upon the text, it is impossible to know with certainty what Dos Passos thought of George Eliot or her literature. He seems to imply that both women felt that they could not be completely honest with the world in order to thrive within their chosen creative fields.

Eveline's sense of helplessness is revealed through her attempt to cope with emerging womanhood. She decides to write a tragic poem before taking poison and falls asleep trying to get the rhymes right. She is endowed with talent and intelligence but her

laziness serves as a severe liability—everything is simply "too tiresome." Dos Passos makes it known that Eveline does not support the war from an ideological standpoint, but she does not once speak out against it either. En route to France, "She went down to her cabin and started reading Barbussse's *Le Feu* that Don had sent her. She fell asleep" (*1919,* 473). After communist Don Stevens later states that she is "ornamental but not useful," she replies, "Oh, Don, I think your ideas are just too tiresome" (*1919,* 636). It makes her feel better to know that she can take her life at any time, and eventually she does, after declaring spiritual and financial bankruptcy. Middle-class Eveline loses everything while working-class girls Eleanor and Janey advance—at a cost.

However fleeting the scenes may be that reveal the economic exploitation that working women were suffering, they nonetheless exhibit Dos Passos's awareness of the unwarranted degradation women experienced in the workplace through practices that remain accepted to this day. Eleanor Stoddard is an objectionable character from childhood. "When she was small she hated everything" (*42nd,* 184). She is shown, however, to demonstrate exceptional talent in the beautification of interior settings, and Dos Passos highlights her talent as she is a valued asset in every workplace she enters. Dos Passos consistently provides his characters' salary information and it becomes readily apparent that women were not being paid fairly for the work that they performed. Eleanor is the most routinely exploited working woman, and the exploitation she encounters certainly provides some justification for her later lust for easy war profits.

Eric Egstrom earns $50 a week in the interior decorating department at Marshall Fields and he is able to afford a fine lifestyle with his salary. He arranges an interview for Eleanor, claiming that she would earn $25 a week working in the same department. It

is not clear if their jobs vary greatly, though her boss Mr. Potter says shortly after she starts: "I think we have quite a find in the Stoddard girl" (*42nd,* 197). Dos Passos clearly means to point out an injustice when he later adds that "the job only paid twenty, which actually only meant eighteen-fifty when insurance was taken off" (*42nd,* 198). Her room and board costs $15 a week, in a small residential hotel, and she is left with $3.50. Eleanor stays at Marshall Field's for "several years" and quits after she and Eveline open their interior decorating service. Her boss attempts to keep her for $40 a week, still less than Eric Egstrom's starting salary; she refuses, and "it took her all day to get her pay and to collect the insurance money due her" (*42nd,* 206).

At the age of 21, Janey was making $17 a week at Dreyfus and Carroll. "She realized now that she was good at her work and that she could support herself whatever happened" (*42nd,* 137). Janey's proud independence is apparent and, sadly she does not know that she is mentally preparing herself for a chaste and loveless future, one where she will *have* to support herself. Janey does not experience Eleanor's economic pains; she is, however, sexually harassed at a job she held briefly after quitting Dreyfus and Carroll. It is easy to disregard the gravity of the event in Janey's life because readers are whisked along so quickly that another instance where she is shown to fight off the unwanted advances of a man is easily forgotten.

> Mr. Richards was a stout man who talked a great deal about the gentleman's code and made love to her. For a couple of weeks she kept him off, but the third week he took to drinking and kept putting his big beefy hands on her and borrowed a dollar one day and at the end of the week said he wouldn't be able to pay her for a day or two, so she just didn't go back and there she was out of a job (*42nd,* 249).

Following Janey's traumatic, pivotal outing with her crush Alec and her brother Joe, "Janey never cried much; things upset her but she got a cold hard feeling all over instead" (*42nd,* 130). Richards made love to her, *they* did not make love. Dos Passos does not simply reference his "hands on her," he references his "big beefy hands on her" and demonstrates remarkable sensitivity in his ability to imagine the reality of an unwanted sexual advance. Janey's coping strategy allows her to instantly switch her focus to work and, oddly, the reality of her unemployment troubles her more than Richards's perverse insensitivity and the money he managed to swindle from her. Shortly thereafter, Janey is hired by Moorehouse earning $25 a week in what appears to be a stunning reversal of fortune. The threat of sexual harassment in Moorehouse's workplace is non-existent as Dos Passos renders him to be asexual to a comical degree. Moorehouse's wife, Gertrude, suspecting he is having an illicit affair with Eleanor shrieks, "Oh, you're cold as a fish …You're just a fish. I'd like you better if you were having an affair with her" (*42nd,* 294). Dos Passos's willingness to confront the issue of sexual harassment within the workplace indicates that he recognized it to be a serious and commonly-occurring violation. Eleanor was relieved that her boss "never tried to make love to her and their relation[s] were always formal; that was a relief to Eleanor because she kept hearing stories" (*42nd,* 203). Men felt entitled to women's bodies and their desires were not coupled with any willingness to commit to or love and care for the woman as an individual.

For Dos Passos's female characters, it was not in their rational self-interest to engage in sexual relations with a man. Jean-Paul Sartre exclaims in his admiring review of *1919*: "How I hate Dos Passos's men! I am given a fleeting glimpse of their minds,

just enough to see that they are living animals" (*The Critical Heritage,* 173) Not only do the women worry in solitude about the threat of an unwanted pregnancy—the men are lousy in bed as well. Communist Don Stevens makes love to Eveline in a "business like way" and "it was three o' clock when feeling weak and guilty and bedraggled she got back to her room at the Brevoort" (*1919,* 472). Radical Mary French is capable of amicable love-making though she is routinely abandoned by her lovers and is forced to reluctantly abort two children. The two women's attempts to love freely are only exploited. Eveline travels in radical circles and when Don Stevens "began to make love to her and she objected that she'd just known him for seven hours he said that was another stupid bourgeois idea she ought to get rid of" (*1919,* 472). It is especially irrational for a woman to involve herself with any of Dos Passos's career radicals. After Don Stevens "ate a lot of spaghetti very fast and drank a lot of red wine" Eveline "lend[s] him half a dollar to leave for Giovanni, said he didn't have a cent in his pocket" (*1919,* 471). Radical Ben Compton persuaded Mary French to "sacrifice their personal feelings for the workingclass," abort their child, and "she had to write her mother again for money to pay for it" (*The Big Money,* 1144).

Dos Passos knew how offensive masculinity can be. It wasn't only radical men playing the game. After Dirk McArthur "ordered everything most expensive he could find on the bill of fare, and champagne" (*1919,* 462), Eveline asks him about their future, after previously having dreamt of Dirk and internally expressing wishes that he would propose.

She had something in her throat that kept her from swallowing. She had to say it before he got too drunk.

"Dirk, this doesn't sound very ladylike, but like this it's too tiresome…The way you acted last spring I thought you liked me…well, how much do you? I want to know."

Dirk put his glass down and turned red. Then he took a deep breath and said, "Eveline, you know I'm not the marrying kind…love'em and leave'em's more like it. I can't help how I am."

"I don't mean I want you to marry me," her voice rose shrilly out of control She began to giggle. "I don't mean I want to be made an honest woman. Anyway, there's no reason." She was able to laugh more naturally. "Let's forget it…I won't tease you anymore."

"You're a good sport, Eveline. I always knew you were a good sport" (*1919,* 463).

Dos Passos appears to be aware here as to how much of an insult it was for a woman to be considered a sport. Eveline is a sport, meaning that she doesn't play offense or defense. She acquiescently performs an idealized feminine role, and suffers loss upon loss throughout the course of her life. Eveline's initial trepidation is apparent and she demonstrates that she has been conditioned to believe that it is unreasonable of her to expect any form of commitment from a man. Dirk's callous response delivers a shocking blow and her voice rises "shrilly out of control" as she immediately attempts to appease Dirk and make it known that she does not respect the institution of marriage. Eveline quickly recovers, conceals her hurt, and plays it cool. The repetition of "good sport" in Dirk's response emphasizes the derogatory statement concealed within this commonly-used, cheerful-sounding term.

Dos Passos's men are not the "marrying kind" and, to further complicate his female characters' lives, the pressure for women to marry was still existent. Janey's mother, disappointed with Janey's drive for independence, "bewail[s] the fact that she ha[s] to work. 'In my day it wasn't considered ladylike, it was thought to be demeaning'"(*42nd,* 135). When Eleanor asks her boss for a raise at the lace shop – she was earning $10 a week – her boss declines by saying, "Why you'll be marrying soon

and leaving me, dear; a girl with your style, indefinable chic can't stay single long, and then you won't need it" (*42nd,* 186). Shortly before being hired by J.W. Moorehouse, a woman at the employment agency grimly states to Janey "that girls ought to marry and that trying to earn their own living was stuff and nonsense because it couldn't be done" (*42nd,* 249).

Janey, Eleanor and Eveline do not hesitate to leave the country when war opportunities are presented to them. Faithful Janey follows J.W. anywhere, fully convinced that the U.S. is saving civilization. She kisses Eleanor on the cheek at an office party after the declaration of war while paternal "J.W. stood by looking out over their heads with a proud smile on his face" (*42nd,* 310). Eleanor, a Francophile who secretly loves Moorehouse and longs to travel Europe, says to herself while mistily observing J.W. and Gertrude and absorbing the beauty of their home, "I'll join the Red Cross. I can't wait to get to France" (*42nd,* 312). Eleanor secures a position for Eveline at their Red Cross office in Paris and upon hearing Eveline exclaims, "'I don't care what kind of work it is, I'll do it gladly' …she was so anxious to cut loose from this America she felt was just too tiresome" (*1919,* 473).

Dos Passos trivializes women's war work by refusing to acknowledge women who performed essential and challenging roles – nurses for example. Janey is an office fixture, with J.W.'s words knocking around inside her otherwise empty head. Eleanor hosts parties. One of her parties features duck roasted with oranges. On one occasion, Eveline pastes "pictures of ruined French farms and orphaned children and starving warbabies into scrapbooks to be sent home for use in Red Cross drives" (*1919,* 543). Eveline later exclaims on the morning of the first of May, 1919—a disappointing first of

May for Dos Passos –"I think I'll strike too, I'm so sick of that Red Cross office I could scream" (*1919,* 632). She doesn't do work.

Dos Passos blasts the Red Cross. He repeatedly mocks the agency for its comical displays of cowardice and general buffoonery. On the Atlantic aboard the *Espagne,* Dos Passos writes in *The Camera Eye (27),* "everybody was very brave except for Colonel and Mrs. Knowlton of the American Red Cross who had waterproof coldproof submarineproof suits like eskimosuits and they wore them and they sat up on deck with the suits all blown up" (*42nd,* 313). Dos Passos's humor is on display in a later scene in Eveline's narrative where J.W. delivers a rousing speech to his Red Cross volunteers:

> "Even at this moment, my friends, we are under fire, ready to make the supreme sacrifice that civilization shall not perish from the earth." Major Wood leaned back in his swivelchair and it let out a squeak that made everybody look up with a start and several people looked out of the window as if they expected to see a shell from big Bertha hurtling right in on them. (*1919,* 547)

To understand Dos Passos's penchant for mocking the Red Cross, it is worthwhile to recount his own personal experience with the agency after the Norton-Harjes drivers were placed under its direction. Dos Passos regularly mailed lengthy, subversive letters across borders and over seas while serving, boldly defying and dodging the censors. Red Cross officer Bates intercepted a letter Dos Passos wrote to his Spanish friend José Giner Pantoja from Italy in February, 1918. Dos Passos was accused of being a "Pacifist" in a letter written by Bates addressed to Red Cross officer Lowell in which he added, "I have no sympathy for him. It is about time we had another object lesson" (*14th,* 151). Dos Passos was dishonorably discharged and he sailed home first class on the *Espagne.* Desperate to get back to Europe and experience as much of the war as he could, "He

wired his Aunt Mamie Gordon that he had been 'falsely accused' and pleaded with her to help him find a new enlistment through her contacts in Washington" (Ludington, 161).

Dos Passos was reenlisted and sent to Camp Crane in Allentown, Pennsylvania – Dos Passos referred to it as "Queen Ennui"—and for the first time he was exposed to everyday Americans and the domestic wartime scene. An October 7, 1918 journal entry recounts a propaganda movie presentation "for the edification of young America seated in the grandstand." He continues: "as German soldiers marched by and were very clumsily atrocious—I could feel a wave of hatred go through the men. Muttered oaths and shouted imprecations—God damned bastards—cocksuckers every one of them—were sincere. The men were furious with war—kill kill kill…Indeed indeed the country is warmad" (*14th,* 220, my ellipsis). Dos Passos did not take a single man from that crowd and represent the American man's warring spirit in *U.S.A.* There aren't any men within *U.S.A.* who are so utterly naïve and thoroughly duped. Charley Anderson enlists without ever displaying any true belief in the importance of U.S. participation in the war; he wanted "to get in on the big war before it went bellyup" (*42nd,* 349). Dick Savage is a well-educated, self-proclaimed pacifist and, like Dos Passos, he enlists as an ambulance driver. The primary consumers of propaganda in *U.S.A.* are women. It is their voices that mindlessly repeat manufactured slogans.

Feminine expressions of patriotism and virulent militarism are strikingly pronounced throughout Dos Passos's fictional narratives. Peripheral characters' brief scenes add to Dos Passos's critique of the American woman's warring spirit. After Joe Williams assaults an officer who was kissing his girlfriend Del, "she said she'd have him arrested for insult to the uniform and assault and battery and that he was nothing but a

yellow sniveling slacker and what was he doing hanging around home when all the boys were at the front fighting the huns" (*1919,* 502). Later, when Joe was walking down Broadway after being apprehended by a cop for not having a registration card, "clerks and counterjumpers along the sidewalks yelled "'Slackers' at them and the girls hissed and booed" (*1919,* 494). Before entering a bar where Joe almost fights two men who advise him to become a class-conscious worker and join the International Workers of the World, Joe walks by "a young girl dressed like a sailor [who] was making a speech about patriotism" (*1919,* 304). On the day of the Armistice, hours before his barroom death, Joe who had been opposed to the war "began to think that maybe [Janey] was right … [the war] was a big opportunity for a young guy …Janey kept writing civilization had to be saved and it was up to us to do it" (*1919,* 560). Janey later honors his death by wearing a gold star, and when Eveline sympathetically inquires about the star and the loved one she lost in the war, Janey fumbles and says, "er…my brother was in the navy" (*1919,* 629, my ellipsis). Joe deserted the navy and was a merchant marine. The gold star symbolizes the brother that Janey wished she would have had as well as the persistent pressure that Dos Passos accused women of heaping upon working-class men.

Dos Passos draws a direct correlation between Janey's career advancement and Joe's working-class stagnation. Early hints suggest that Dos Passos closely associated women's advancement and their bourgeois values with the oppression of working-class men. Joe's promising baseball career is ended when his "Popper said he had three girls to support and Joe would have to get to work" (*42nd,* 126). Despite the Williams's meager finances, Janey's mother holds fast to her more affluent, bourgeois roots and reminds Janey after schooling her on the importance of refusing to associate with colored

people "that [her] mother's people were wellborn every inch of them … they lived in a big house with the most lovely lawns" (*42nd,* 123, my ellipsis). Janey is taught to strive for the respectability guaranteed by wealth, and not to content herself with the degradation that accompanies working-class status. Joe is a casualty.

"All my future's behind me" Joe jokingly states to Janey after she suggests he consider office work as a way to uplift himself (*42nd,* 297). Through her work for J.W. Moorehouse, Janey unwittingly serves to suppress workingmen like Joe, and she revels in working at an interesting office where they are "combating subversive tendencies among the miners who were mostly foreigners who had to be educated in the principles of Americanism" (*42nd,* 289). As Joe suffers the abuses of an exploitative system, he is woefully unable to comprehend a way out from underneath its crushing weight, or to imagine the promise of revolution. After two I.W.W. members suggest Joe become a classconscious worker, "Joe said that stuff was only for foreigners, but if somebody started a white man's party to fight the profiteers and the goddam bankers he'd be with 'em" (*1919,* 504). Despite Joe's racism, and his lack of class-consciousness, he does possess an informed antipathy to the war and an uncommon knowledge of the moneyed interests perpetuating the whole "crooked" affair.

Joe and Janey sit down for dinner – his heavy workshoes and splattered pants make her uncomfortable – and "Janey went on to talk about the war and how she wished we were in it to save civilization and poor little helpless Belgium" (*42nd,* 298). Dos Passos ridicules American women for their sentimental support of "poor little helpless Belgium," a childlike entity that pitifully demanded their motherly love and provided them with a compelling case for U.S. entry in the European war. Gertrude Moorehouse

who was "absolutely prostrated by the terrible news" of U.S. entry into the war, later adds, "Of course it is terrible what the Huns have done, cutting the hands off Belgian children and all that" (*42nd,* 311). Even Eliza Felton, a lesbian who drives trucks and "didn't have much use for any male government," sentimentally refers to the "poor little Belgian babies with their hands cut off" (*42nd,* 473). American mothers are not represented favorably throughout *U.S.A.*, and so there is an implied irony in Dos Passos's presentation of the American woman's maternal instincts and how they were grafted onto baby Belgium. Gertrude's governess raises her children, Eliza does not have any, and Janey remains single and childless.

Dos Passos implores American women to experience the war in a January 8, 1918 journal entry that leads: "Women & the war—The new feminism—And the more women who get mixed up in it the better" (*14th,* 122). Given his stance on women's war participation in *U.S.A.*, this earlier proposal for women to get mixed up in the war and forge a new feminism gives the impression that Dos Passos may have reversed his opinion regarding the topic. In actuality, the journal entry is largely consistent with his later stance and it provides clues for better understanding the barren social landscape contained within *U.S.A.'*s fictional narratives. Janey, Eleanor and Eveline participate in the war although it cannot be said that they experience the war. Forget the logistics involved in carting loads of women to witness a battlefield, Dos Passos wanted women "to look at things as they are. Out of things as they are are ideals made" (*14th,* 122). Dos Passos contemplates America's menacing presence, considers the possibility for a new and hopeful future, and concludes that American women must learn about the realities of war and that it is their responsibility to prevent future wars through their roles as mothers

because "the sad part of it is that its from the women of a generation that the next generation gets its all-important things—life, attitudes, sensibilities & revulsions" (*14th,* 122).

Janet Casey, who cogently argues that *U.S.A* "manifests a social consciousness that consistently and provocatively accommodates gender as a fundamental category of social analysis," addresses Dos Passos's journal entry and praises his "overtly feminist" statement (Casey*,* 1, 44). Yes, he does indeed wish to release women, as Casey writes, "from the cocoon into which society forces them." However, Dos Passos's "new feminism"—perhaps sarcastically stated—calls upon women to expand their consciousness to strengthen their fitness for the rigors of motherhood, and at no point does his "feminism" encourage women to assume other prominent or powerful public roles. Mary French cultivates an impressive set of ideals and after briefly considering a Red Cross stint overseas she decides "she so hated war that she didn't want to do anything to help even in the most peaceful way" (*TBM,* 875). The single female character who possesses the characteristics of a mother that Dos Passos would have found favorable aborts two children—yet another morbid development. Dos Passos takes his hopeful "Women & the war" journal entry and flips it on its head in *U.S.A's* fictional narratives. Mary French is not only Vassar-educated and enlightened, she is also a loving and nurturing woman whose two children were never brought to life. Dos Passos did not wish to relegate women to the private sphere; his "Women & the war" journal entry elevates the mother who possesses knowledge of the public sphere and declares her to be essential for the formation of a more just and peaceful U.S.A. Dos Passos clearly was not comfortable with the realities that demanded women to abandon their roles as mothers or,

more broadly, an American society that he did not view to be pro-life. Love is absent in Dos Passos's pro-war America—greed, crass materialism, blind careerism and ignorant destruction prevail—it's a fictional apocalypse.

When Dos Passos concludes his "Women & the war" journal entry by criticizing "our inane attitudes towards the war, our ignorance & stupidity, our womanish sentimentality stored up like a vat of dye, ready to be poured over whatever those who pull the strings of our ideas & emotions want disguised" (*14th,* 123), he could have been directly referencing his later fictional creation, Janey Williams. Janey, whose capacity to love is pronounced, seizes upon the war as a non-sexual, romantic affair. Joe gruffly responds to her misguided belief that the U.S. would be fighting to save civilization and attempts to expose the cleverly disguised machinations of the war effort to Janey as she mindlessly works in the belly of the industry that is so expertly pulling the strings of American ideas and emotions.

> "What we wanta do's sit back and sell 'em munitions and let 'em blow 'emselves to hell. An' those babies are makin' big money in Bordeaux and Toulouse or Marseilles while their own kin are shootin' daylight into each other at the front, and it's the same thing with the limeys…I'm tellin' ye, Janey, this war's crooked, like every other goddam thing."
>
> Janey started to cry. "Well, you needn't curse and swear all the time." "I'm sorry, sister," said Joe humbly, "but I'm just a bum an' that's about the size of it an' not fit to associate with a nicedressed girl like you." "No, I didn't mean that," said Janey, wiping her eyes. (*42nd,* 298).

As J.W. Moorehouse's secretary, Janey is privy to sensitive information that details the active suppression of workers' movements nationwide. Joe struggles to survive while Janey churns out copy that reveals the exact measures being taken to impoverish her brother and his fellow workers. Joe delivers a challenge to Janey's claim that U.S. entry into the war would serve the noble and necessary cause of saving

civilization, and she cries. The same father who prematurely ordered Joe to enter the workforce mutters to Janey from his deathbed: "I done my best by you kids. You don't know what life is, none of you, been sheltered and now you ship me off to die in the hospital" (*42nd,* 141). Unaware of Joe's whereabouts, Janey's father clearly does not include Joe among his sheltered kids. Joe doesn't read much other than the baseball scores and it is only through first-hand, real-world experience that he is able to shape his opinion of the war. Prior to meeting Moorehouse, Janey "began to read the paper every day and to take an interest in politics" (*42nd,* 136). Her interest in politics is not coupled with any worldly experience and so her "ideals" have sadly, and dangerously, been formed out of what Dos Passos describes in his journal entry as the "waxwork figures that stand about on clouds of pink sentimentality in the woman's world" (*14th,* 122). Dos Passos believed that American women could be better. He cruelly injects Janey with an exaggerated ignorance and, in doing so, he revealed his own belief that the American woman's ignorance was one of the most menacing realities of American life. His earlier, more hopeful journal entry expressed his belief that educated women could shape America's future into "something new—with hope in it" (*14th,* 123).

The blunt force of Joe's words shock and offend Janey's sensibilities, and she responds, "Well, you needn't curse and swear all the time" (*42nd,* 298). The content of Joe's message passes through her as quickly as the truths that are made available to her while transcribing for Moorehouse. She is not disturbed by the content of Joe's message, because it clearly does not register—it's simply not presented to her in a soothing manner—because he uses violent swear words.

Young Johnny Moorehouse wanted to be a songwriter. His unmarried piano teacher, Miss O'Higgins, "listened with rapture to his original compositions…*Oh, show me the state where the peaches bloom where maids are fair…It's Delaware" (*42nd, 159, my ellipsis). His compositions are rejected by publishers—big mistake on their behalf—and, like Hitler who would later come, Moorehouse, the failed artist, projects his suave talents in an emotional and apolitical way onto the political stage instead, and women listen. When Moorehouse would speak to Miss O'Higgins "her cheeks would blush and she'd feel almost pretty" (*42nd,* 159). It is important to note that Moorehouse was born into the working class and, like Joe and Janey, he believed it to be a shameful label, something to be shed and overcome. Joe "humbly" responds to Janey's anguished outbreak: "but I'm just a bum an' that's about the size of it an' not fit to associate with a nicedressed girl like you" (*42nd,* 298). This further demonstrates that the American working class was at war with itself. After young Janey meets Moorehouse she chatters to her friend Alice about "his handsome boyish blue eyes, and [he] was so nice, and silver teaservice, and how young he looked in spite of his prematurely gray hair, and the open fire and the silver cocktail shaker and the crystal glasses" (*42nd,* 254). Young Janey is taken in by his charming innocence and the dazzling wealth of his surroundings. The appropriately-named Dick Savage mercilessly scrutinizes the physical appearance of every woman he crosses, and the details contained within his observations make it clear that Dos Passos did as well. Savage makes mental note of the bleached blonde, "Inevitable Miss Williams" who is situated in the office as usual and "her sour lined old-maidish face [that] was twisted into a sugary smile" (*TBM,* 1184). Janey's work is her life, and Moorehouse jokes to Savage while the three are working around the clock on an

assignment: ”She’s sour as a pickle but a treasure, I tell you” (*TBM,* 1197). The implicit irony in Janey’s life is that she spends her entire life working while she believes that she has escaped the working class. Janey is the treasure.

Elanor Stoddard escapes her coarse, working-class Chicago childhood and, without sparing her any of his cruel comedic innuendo, Dos Passos eventually comes to officially declare Eleanor an ice princess by marrying her into a crude, exiled, Russian royal family. Eleanor’s consumer desires can not be termed crass – she is nonetheless driven in relentless pursuit of the refined beauty that accompanies wealth. Dos Passos furthers his critique of American consumerism in radical Ben Compton’s narrative when he represents the wartime consumer frenzy that civilians, women especially, were enjoying on the domestic front. Ben’s girlfiriend, Helen Mauer, does not buy into the hysteria while her folks and friends “were buying washing machines, liberty bonds, vacuum cleaners, making first payments on houses. The girls were buying fur coats and silk stockings” (*1919,* 734). Crass, American materialism engenders heartless displays of callous disregard for the working-class men who are sacrificing their lives to feed this destructive machine.

Dos Passos generously slathers young Eleanor’s kindly, working-class father in lovable goodness, and the bitter heartlessness and hate with which she regards him is, like Janey’s ignorance, taken to the extreme. Eleanor wants to forget her father, she avoids his calls and, as an art student, she “would have to go by to see her father and get a couple of dollars from him. He gave it to her gladly enough, but somehow that made her hate him more than ever” (*42nd,* 187). His kindness is pitiful. While working at Marshall Fields, her salary is the same as his, yet she makes him promise to send her five dollars a

week despite his own hardships, and she wants it sent because she refuses to visit. During her last visit "she kissed him on the forehead and made him feel quite happy" and as she leaves "she was telling herself that this was the very last time (*42nd,* 198). She regards herself as the victim in the transaction and it becomes clear that discontented working-class/working girls were a source of great angst for Dos Passos. Their militancy is pronounced and working-class men must endure their bourgeois demands and impossible standards—both Janey and Eleanor withhold any and all forms of love from working-class men. Moorehouse was born into the working class, but he kept his dirty secret so cleverly hidden that at no point does it appear that either Janey or Eleanor become aware of his truth.

On the verge of losing everything—her home, apartment, friends, looks, fur coat, J.W.—Eleanor lies in bed and begins to question her values:

> She thought of her colored maid Augustine with her unfortunate loves that she always told Eleanor about and she wished she'd been like that. Maybe she'd been wrong from the start to want everything so justright and beautiful (*42nd,* 306).

The next day, while contemplating suicide in the backseat of a taxi, she hears Wilson's DECLARATION OF WAR declared and "she felt elated." Eleanor meets J.W. in a hotel lobby—"his blue eyes were on fire"—and she confides: "It's wonderful and terrible, I'm trembling like a leaf" (*42nd,* 308). Her life is now "justright and perfect" and the soundness of her value system has received confirmation. She does not need to change.

Middle-class Eveline is given an early introduction to the nature of America's social ills and the plight of the poor by her father who serves as a Unitarian minister. She greatly admires her father and when she asks him "why didn't God do something about

the problems and evils of Chicago, and the conditions" he smiled and said "she was too young to worry about those things yet" (*1919,* 452). Eveline's social consciousness is consistent with many of her middle-class peers, and Dos Passos suggests that radicalism was both a privilege and responsibility of their class. Her inquiry into Chicago's ills and how they relate to God and *his* inattentiveness provides early indication that she is compassionate and aware but at the same time she sees that it is up to someone else to actually do the work to remedy the situation. Eveline accepts the privileges of belonging to the middle class and associating with radicals—she is beautiful and hip and is featured in the society pages—yet, she doesn't accept any of the responsibilities that accompany her privileges. She works briefly at Hull House, and that is what she likes doing best one bleak, Chicago winter. That is the extent of her activism and the rest of her life is wasted as she drifts without ever declaring any meaningful purpose. The war is just background noise—she does not support it, but she is willing to participate for a lack of anything better to do.

Dos Passos represents two other women born into the middle-class who do not support the war and, unlike Eveline, they choose to protest in ways that are suited to their capacities. Mary French simply chooses not to participate and remains home to attend to the domestic labor scene. The great Isadora Duncan, the only woman whose life warranted a celebratory biography, "danced the *Marseillaise,* but it didn't seem quite respectable and she gave offense by refusing to give up Wagner or to show the proper respectable feelings of satisfaction at the butchery" (*TBM,* 900). Despite their differing means of willful self-expression, the three women share in common powerful and erotic attractions to men. Rather than cheering a cause that mercilessly churns the flesh of

young men through a meat grinder, the three women desire the flesh of men to be pressing against their own. This could not have been an editorial coincidence. Dos Passos simply wanted men and women to come together. The fact of the war was precluding that possibility and, more importantly, the growing distance between men and women made it easier for women to accept the unacceptable facts of the war.

It is sometimes important to observe what is absent within a text in order to get closer to revealing an author's intents and purposes. Dos Passos may have taken his exaltation of women who love men a bit too far in his biography of Isadora Duncan. He champions Isadora –"She was an American like Walt Whitman" (*TBM,* 899)—but as he celebrates her love of men, she begins to come across as a lecherous woman on a downward spiral—"there was nothing left she cared for in the world but a few drinks and a goodlooking young man" (*TBM,* 902). Dos Passos repeats instances of Duncan throwing herself at men, yet he was somehow able to overlook her lengthy and passionate affair with the American poet and playwright Mercedes de A'costa. Dos Passos immortalizes Duncan as a serial, helplessly heterosexual man-chaser while at some point during the time he covered her life, Duncan wrote: "Mercedes, Lead me with your little strong hands and I will follow you, to the top of a mountain, to the end of the world, whichever you wish" (Schenke, 78). It is possible that Dos Passos did not know about Duncan's alternative sexual preferences or that his own sexual prudishness may have influenced his decision to omit the more risqué dimensions of Isadora's sexuality. Or, perhaps female homosexuality threatened to destabilize his antiwar, hetero-normative, reproductive regime. His imagined, peaceful society features love between men and

women, procreation and the firm guidance of nurturing, enlightened mothers—a U.S.A. where women do not desire independence from men and family.

Seth Moglen writes in *Mourning Modernity* of a similar absence in Mary French's storyline. Dos Passos celebrates French's tenacity and heart and, at the same time, he refuses "to provide his heroine with any female comrades at all. While heterosexuality uniformly fails, female homosocial or homoerotic bonds have been erased entirely from Dos Passos's account of the Left" (Moglen, 215). French is held up as a victim to the Left's male career radicals, and Dos Passos demonstrates through her victimization their failure to wield any credible influence over women that could potentially rival Moorehouse. Moorehouse tells Eveline over dinner: "Eveline, women have been a great inspiration to me all my life, lovely charming delicate women. Many of my best ideas have come from women not directly, you understand, but through the mental stimulation" (*1919,* 623). Moorehouse listens to women. Dos Passos's radicals regard women with predatory desire, and when Mary French proves herself to be a dogged Comrade, they treat her like a dog and she is left to handle the grunt work. Mary's commitment to the working class is not compromised by the romantic abuses and degradation she endures, and Dos Passos laces her storyline with allegory and provides single women with a role model through his approval of her perseverance and dedication. Mary is not single by choice. After Ben leaves Mary vows: "She'd never fall for a man again. Her mother had sent her a check for Christmas. With that she bought herself some new clothes and quite a becoming hat. She started to curl her hair again" (*TBM,* 1147). After longing for her later lover Don Stevens, Mary learns that he callously left her without notice and married an English Comrade in Russia. Mary's acquaintance in the movement, Sylvia, tells her

that his wife has "got a great shock of red hair …stunning but some of the girls think it's dyed" (*TBM,* 1229). Mary immediately orders gin and "at night she couldn't sleep without filling herself up with dope. She didn't seem to have any will left" (*TBM,* 1230). Mary's only friend, Ada, a bourgeois mismatch indeed, provides Mary with needed friendship, nurses her back to health, and Mary leaves after "she began to be impatient of Ada's sly references to unhappy loveaffairs and broken hearts and the beauty of abnegation and would snap Ada's head off whenever she started it" (*TBM,* 1230). Mary regains strength and resumes her work, and Dos Passos implies that if she must be single and performing secretary work, thanklessly and like Janey who is plain-looking as well, her commitment to the working class is honorable, even if and especially because her militant, bourgeois mother supports her cause. Mary's bigoted, hateful mother does not influence Mary's beliefs; instead, her kindly physician father who provides health care for Colorado miners and their families serves as a revolutionary role model for young Mary. When Mary was young, "often she lay there with her teeth clenched wishing if Mother would only die and leave her and Daddy living alone quietly together" (*The Big Money,* 860).

Eleanor and Eveline's "beautiful friendship" is destroyed by an abruptly-ended love triangle involving J.W. Moorehouse, and Dos Passos eventually reveals the tenuousness of the bond that joins the strongest and most enduring female homo-social friendship in the trilogy. J.W. abandons Eveline in their hotel room following a tryst and returns to Nice alone. Eveline cruelly disregards Eleanor's relationship with Moorehouse, vies for his attention, and after J.W. leaves she "lay in bed thinking that she was acting like a nasty little bitch; but it was too late to go back now" (*1919,* 624). Just

prior to Eveline's affair with J.W., she shares communist Don Stevens's excitement over the success of the Bolsheviki in Russia and other promising events that were setting the precedence for the possibility of global revolution. She looks at Don Stevens in his Quaker uniform and "decided maybe she'd been in love with him all along" (*1919,* 550). She notices later "that spring and summer things certainly did seem shaky, almost as if Don were right" (*1919,* 551). Morale at the Red Cross office is flagging and Moorehouse returns to Paris.

> The same evening [Moorehouse] asked Eveline to dine with him at the Café de la Paix and to do it she broke a date she had with Jerry Burnham who had gotten back from the Near East and the Balkans and was full of stories of cholera and calamity… [Moorehouse] talked about the gigantic era of expansion that would dawn for America after the war. America the good samaritan healing the wounds of wartorn Europe. It was as if he was researching a speech, when he got to the end of it he looked at Eveline with a funny deprecatory smile and said, 'And the joke of it it, it's true,' and Eveline laughed and suddenly found that she liked J.W. very much indeed (*1919,* 551, my ellipsis).

The ease with which Moorehouse converts her to his interpretation of events is notable. The information that would have been delivered to her from Jerry Burnham — truthful journalistic accounts of the horrors of war—Moorehouse spins, to Eveline's delight, in a manner that erases the actual atrocities of war. Moorehouse is able to infuse his message with an optimism that fails to acknowledge America's involvement in the destruction and he laces his message with the arrogance that allows Americans to view their nation as a "good samaritan" while, in truth, American businesses plan to storm postwar Europe and profit from the reconstruction. Eveline prefers Moorehouse's interpretation of events and later loses all patience for radicalism. After dinner, J.W. and Eveline run into Don Stevens and doughboy Paul Johnson as they approach her place and the four go upstairs. J.W. exits abruptly, Don expresses his contempt for Cross Red

Majors and "Eveline becomes angry. 'Well it's no worse than being a fake Quaker,' she said icily" (*1919,* 552). It is important to note the coldness in Eveline's response because Moorehouse has entered her mind and her body and she is beginning to display signs of frigidity. Moorehouse's truth is later revealed to her in bed: "No matter how much she cuddled against him, she couldn't get to feel really warm" (*1919,* 627). The following night he catches a cold, rents adjoining rooms, and riding home alone the next day Eveline decides "she [is] very unhappy indeed" (*1919,* 628).

Jerry Burnham tries to warn Eveline against falling for Moorehouse, "the big" bluff, the "goddam microphone." He expresses that he thought she was different from other upper-class, attractive women and, with a sigh, he defines her life and, in doing so, reveals Dos Passos's contempt for the role that women play in the perpetuation of war through their worship of power and, through Jerry Burnaham, Dos Passos states it in a manner that suggests he does not believe beautiful women will ever change and that nothing will ever change until they come to seek truth and not power.

> "You're the most damnably attractive woman I ever met Eveline…but like all women what you worship is power, when money's the main thing it's money, when it's fame it's fame, when it's art, you're a goddamned artlover…I guess I'm the same, only I kid myself more."
>
> Eveline pressed her lips together and didn't say anything. She suddenly felt cold and frightened and lonely and couldn't think of anything to say (*1919,* 613).

Eveline listens yet her behavior goes unchanged. She is later trashed by Moorehouse and Dos Passos delivers more dark humor in the form of punishment when she becomes impregnated by bumbling, apologetic Paul Johnson. Jeremy is born, not out of love, but rather a pathetic and clumsy attempt at freedom in postwar Europe. Eveline chases power, and instead she receives Paul—"she kept telling herself that Paul had stuff

in him, that she was in love with Paul, that something could be made out of Paul" (*1919,* 641). He is a nice guy, and he later does the dishes in their New York home. Michael Denning notes that there are more abortions than births in the trilogy and that Eveline is the only central female character to give birth to a child that lives. Eveline's callous disregard for her son Jeremy is emphasized—"The little darling looks more like our Darwinian ancestor,' said Eveline coldly. 'When I first saw him I cried and cried. Oh, I hope he grows a chin" (*TBM,* 820). Through Eveline, Dos Passos furthers his critique of American mothering as he introduces a caricatured representation of the new and ill-qualified generation of women to assume the role.

Dos Passos's "Women & the war" journal entry does not acknowledge the father and his revolutionary potential. When Dos Passos wrote that men "are awfully incidental parts of the machine of production" (*14th,* 122), he could have been directly referencing his own father, John Randolph Dos Passos. Dos Passos did not receive much of anything from his father other than the money that was required to provide his son with a world-class education. It was Dos Passos's mother, Lucy Addison Sprigg Madison, who introduced him to the world—and who must certainly deserve a fair amount of credit and recognition for the development of her son's moral standards. Dos Passos must have been giving *her* some credit and recognition when he wrote in his "Women & the war" journal entry that "It's on the women, that the men to come, as well as the women to come, depend" (*14th,* 122). His "hotel childhood," lovingly and intimately traveled with his mother, served to endow him with a peculiar sensibility in his relations with women, and perhaps it was she who taught him what a woman could be, setting for him an example of what the women of his generation were clearly not matching. Eveline

represents the young mothers of Dos Passos's generation and she so thoroughly fails that not only does Paul step in and play the role of father, he takes Eveline's child away from her as well—and she does not care. Dos Passos disposes of Eveline as easily as she disposes of Jeremy—without grief. The statement contained within Mary French's response to Eveline's suicide is a powerful one. Mary purposefully rushes to defend a fallen Comrade and refuses to receive further calls regarding Eveline's death. She propels herself forward and her parting quote serves as the last word in Dos Passos's fictional narratives—"I have too much to do to spend my time taking care of hysterical women on a day like this" (*TBM,* 1238).

Dos Passos believed that American women could be better. He was not a misogynist—he was not a feminist either. His only unequivocal *ism* was the anti-communism he later embraced after his close friend, José Robles Pazos, was assassinated by the Communist Party during the Spanish Civil War—the mystery surrounding his death was never solved but Dos Passos maintained his belief in the Communist Party's complicity. Dos Passos believed that working-class men deserved a break, and that women who supported the war made it abundantly clear that they, along with the capitalist bosses, were not going to provide them with one. Modern American women eagerly participated in the war and many, as Dos Passos suggests, believed they were making desirable progress through their war support. But the war was too great, and it was all an illusion. Suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt, who at one time opposed U.S. entry into the war, appealed to President Wilson—"Meester Veelson" —when she pointed out to him just how good his American girls had been through their support of the war. President Wilson's declaration of war was delivered shortly after he was re-elected with

the “he kept us out of war” slogan. Wilson, who had previously laughed at suffragists and their campaign for nationwide voting rights, was converted into an unlikely ally and he later proposed to Congress: “We have made partners of women in this war. Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of right?” The 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920 and women are still waiting for their “partnership of right”—with “partnership” serving as the operative word. According to Dos Passos, the romantic conservative, war was not the answer—that is, unless the U.S.A. was ruthlessly carpet-bombing the Communists out of Cambodia.

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